

**Middletown School Readiness Council**  
**12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.**  
**Wednesday, September 18, 2012**  
**Wilbert Snow School**  
**299 Wadsworth St.**  
**Middletown, CT 06457**

**Members Present:** Alice Torres, Ed Bonilla, Christine Fahey, Sheila Daniels, Wendy Berlind, Beverly Lawrence, Liz Fraser, Donna Marino, Susan Sienkewicz, Izzi Greenberg, Christine O'Grady. Also present: Traci Dubois for Amy Waterman, Mia Vibert for Lisa Golembiewski, and Cindy Guerreri, Discovery Liaison.

**Welcome & Call to Order:** Incoming Co-Chair Ed Bonilla called the meeting to order at 12:22. Opening remarks included thanking Betsy Morgan for her past leadership, Chris Fahey, and everyone present. Ed also noted that he learns more at every meeting and will represent the Council to the best of his ability. Incoming Co-Chair Alice Torres added that she is happy to serve the community in this capacity after living in Middletown for eight years. Alice thanked Betsy, too, for her work as Council chair. Ed added thanks to Sheila for her assistance. Introductions were made.

**Announcements:** Donna shared the Middletown Schools Association (MSA) schedule of meetings for the school year. MSA meets on the 4th Monday of the month at the Youth Services Board (YSB) building on 372 Hunting Hill Ave. This month's meeting will be on Sept. 23rd from 6:30 - 8:00 P.M. Attendees are encouraged to bring a donation of one food item for the Amazing Grace Food Pantry to the meeting. Items on the agenda include: Donna Marino and Elizabeth Nocera will review results of the District Climate surveys; Superintendent Pat Charles will be present for Q &A; and, Technology Committee news.

Wendy Berlind shared news from Russell Library. The library created "parenting bags" funded by the Community Foundation of Middlesex County. Each bag offers important information in English and/or Spanish on many pertinent parenting topics. Russell Library is sponsoring "Stop Bullying" with guest anti-bullying author Elaine Wolf on Sat. Sept. 28th at 2:00 P.M.

Chris circulated a flyer offering a free citizenship class at First Church every Tuesday and Thursday, Oct. 1st through Nov. 21st from 9:30 to 11:00 A.M. Flyers were circulated for workshop opportunities and included CAEYC Pathways Conference on Oct. 18th and 19th, St. Joseph University Fall Workshop Series, and Middletown Early Childhood Network (MECN) workshop featuring storyteller and retired SmartEarly Learning Center staff member Charlotte Warmsley on Sept. 25th.

**III. Acceptance of the June 19, 2013 School Readiness Council meeting:**

Wendy Berlind moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Donna Marino seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**IV. Financial Report:** was distributed, as of Sept. 1st showing that all full day, full year programs were full in July and August. There are openings currently available as the new kindergarten cohort begins school. Superintendent Charles will approve a flyer that will be distributed to the schools regarding the openings at School Readiness sites in Middletown. Chris will email the flyer to the Council once it is approved. Ed offered to post the flyer on United Way's website.

**V. Coordinator's Report:**

**Monthly Report: Summary Report:** was distributed and showed 175 full day spaces utilized in July and August with the majority of the children served being from low income families and on public health insurance. Liz asked about parent fees, reminding the Council of the continued concern around the child care fee schedule issue. Chris noted that she will be attending a meeting tomorrow of School Readiness Coordinators at the Office of Early Childhood and that issue will be discussed. She will report back to the council next month on that discussion.

**Program Update:** The Council was reminded that Middlesex College closed its child care programs at its campus site and Macdonough School in June. The YMCA took over the Macdonough space and created a site at Bielefield School. Program Director, Karin James, did a yeoman's job licensing the classrooms at both sites, but especially at Bielefield where the challenge of remediation work on mold was underway for the majority of the summer. The classroom at Bielefield opened last Thursday. Other news from Middlesex included the N.A.E.Y.C. accreditation of their early childhood associates program with conditions.

**Quality Enhancement Grant Update:** An award letter was received for this grant in July. This was very good news, as it typically arrives in the fall delaying the receipt of funds to after the new year.

**Community Foundation of Middlesex County Grant Update:** The grant application for our storytelling program provided by the CT Storytelling Association was submitted. If awarded, the School Readiness programs will receive storytelling programs during the second half of this school year. Under the new grant regulations, agencies are required to take one year off every three years. We could not apply last year, but were able to secure funding for an Arts Catalyzing Grant from the State Arts Office. We will apply for those funds again this year to supplement any storytelling grant award from the Community Foundation.

**Birth to 3 Report:** Town-By-Town Snapshot report was distributed and showed that 553 infants were born in Middletown in 2012. Of those, Birth to 3 received 109 and served 119 children. Liz noted that the statistics from a document she was reviewing indicate that 25% of live births are to mothers who did not complete high school. She went on to add that for Middletown that percentage had been up to 70% and then went down to 40%. Discussion followed. It was noted that it is hard to identify younger mothers.

**Early Childhood 2012 Report Card:** hard copies were distributed. This document offers good data to use when writing grants. She noted this was presented at a meeting of the Discovery Liaisons.

**In the News:** Chris circulated her iPad with an article and photo in the Middletown Press about the "Reach Out and Read" program at Middlesex Family Practice. Dr. Cliff O'Callahan hosted this photo op that was sponsored by Reach Out and Read. It featured 10 children from Town & Country Early Learning Center and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro. Many thanks to Judi Kenney, Director at Town and Country, for getting parent permission for each child to participate and for walking the children over to Family Practice to enjoy the story time.

**Capital Improvement RFP Update:** Months ago, across the state a RFP went out for minor capital improvements to child care programs. Applications were approved by the Bond Commission this summer. \$5.6 million was distributed statewide. Priorities for funding in this round included those applications that demonstrated the highest need for improving children and staff safety and security. Every Middletown program that applied for this funding received some funds:

- Middletown CRT - Hamlin Security 5,400
- Middletown Kiddie World Daycare & Preschool, Inc. - Smart ELC Playground & radiators replacement; bathroom renovations 173,000
- Middletown Town & Country Early Learning Center Replace floorings 32,700
- Middletown YMCA of Northern Middlesex County - Phelps Ingersoll CC Bathroom renovation; storage cabinets and flooring 32,200

There will be another round of awards later this year for other requests in these applications.

**Early Childhood State Level Update:** A new monitoring system is in development in a movement toward creating a uniform system across the state in Child Day Care and School Readiness Programs. The way that Care4Kids funds and parent fees are spent will also be monitored, as well as program's plans for teachers not yet credentialed to earn the approved teacher credential.

**Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Update:** Governor Malloy signed an executive order this summer to create the OEC. The state moved 70 people from DSS, DPH, SDE, and DDS into space provided at the state building near the Bushnell while they wait for a different space to be renovated for their occupancy. A celebration was held on July 26<sup>th</sup> and silo busting activities occurred soon after. Alice shared that she was present at the celebration and Gov. Malloy stated that he wants to see a universal preschool bill before he leaves office. She also noted the opening of this new office is a very nice cultural shift; Myra did a wonderful job. National Associations for Regulatory Administration (NARA), has been hired by the OEC to review CT's licensing standards. A survey has gone out to child care providers to understand the strengths and concerns of the present system. The goal is to move licensing standards beyond health and safety compliance to include nurturing experiences and good outcomes for children. Other infrastructure updates include building a system for data integration that will report on child outcomes and process payment to providers. NAEYC has completed their content validation of the new draft CT Early Learning Standards for Birth to Five. A committee has gone to work reviewing the recommendations and writing the final draft of the standards. A November release of the standards is expected.

**Race To The Top (RTTT) Update:** CT is writing its second application for Early Childhood RTTT funding. CT Voices for Children has compiled a list of work done in CT since the last application to move the early childhood agenda forward. A handout outlining the five key areas of reform – successful state systems, high-quality accountable programs, promoting early learning and development outcomes for children, a great early education workforce, and measuring outcomes and progress - was distributed. Our biggest weakness in the last application was the absence of a Quality Improvement and Rating System (QRIS). A grant writer was hired; she was the author of Maryland's funded application in the last round.

**Early Literacy Update:** This year's school calendar changes gives elementary staff 18 half days for professional development. Of those 18, four days have been set aside for Pre-K and Kindergarten staff to engage in shared professional development. The IDEA grant has been cut and those cuts may impact the literacy coaching staff. This is a wait and see situation. The heavy focus this year will be on coaching the kindergarten staff. Under summer learning loss, reading scores were compiled last spring and fall scores will be added this fall for comparison. Elementary Instructional Support Teachers (EIST) will be compiling a list of school-sponsored summer literacy activities so that we have an asset map baseline of what is already happening in the schools over the summer. The Circle of Security program led by Charlie Slaughter has connected with DCF who may provide funds to staff the eight week series.

"Let's Talk" training is going to be offered to infant and toddler teachers on Martin Luther King's Day. There is space for five additional people to attend this training, i.e. new home visiting staff. Let Chris know if you are interested in securing a space.

**Pre-K - K Alignment Committee:** Plans are in development to offer playgroups in elementary schools this year. Pre-K - K exchange visits will pair preschool and kindergarten programs for a fall and spring exchange visit to each other's site. A focused observation agenda will be designed for discussion purposes.

**Discovery Update:** Cindy noted that she is working with Torrington and they have an observation tool we might want to borrow for the PreK-K exchange visits. She also noted that data workshops continue and there will be more workshops offered to help programs access available early childhood data in the state. People were encouraged to go through the training exercise when it becomes available. In other news, David Nee announced his retirement, so the Graustein Memorial Fund is searching for a new executive director.

**Stone Soup 2013:** will be held in Cromwell on Oct. 22nd. Registration opens today and Chris will send the information out this afternoon via e-mail. This is a very informative and popular event and early registration was encouraged.

**Discovery Grant Update:** The Middletown School Readiness Council received \$90,000 to continue our Discovery and Early Literacy work.

**Even Start Update:** Liz noted that three statewide programs are working together with the state to grow the program system wide. They feel a global approach is better for funding. Locally, the Even Start program is full. They are down to two classrooms this year with a total of 16

slots. There are 12 on the waiting list and eight babies are due later in the year. Liz also noted that this population is fragile so requested that people keep sending referrals. She shared the selection criteria: it is weighted with several components - an adult with literacy needs and child living in same household. There is a point system on needs - education, DCF, housing and referrals. Over 50 points is a high priority. A Circle of Security program will be held for their families.

**Early Head Start (EHS) Update:** Alice shared that they are living with the impact of the sequestration cuts and are being told that there might be another round. The program is currently full and serving 56 families. Further impact of the sequestration has forced them to roll children into home visiting for the summer. Eight children were cut from the Even Start program. EHS is primarily going to be a home visiting program now and is working on a locally designed option.

Alice said that it is important to have a two-generational program. She mentioned that data shows mental health issues among some parents and the program is looking to support these needs. There is a waiting list, but Alice still encourages people to make referrals. There has been an increase in the number of expectant families seeking services and EHS has only six slots to help those families. Early Head Start relocated from Hunting Hill Ave. to Moody School this summer. There will be an open house in the near future. The downside of this move is that there is no public transportation to Moody School. Discussion followed around busing needs and shortfalls, and the possibility of looking into requesting a hearing. It was suggested that providing a stop at SmartEarly Learning Center be include in the bus line request, too. Alice also shared "Early Years Matter", the EHS newsletter, with the Council.

**Child FIRST Update:** There are currently 30 open cases, with 14 on a wait list. Continue to refer families so that Child FIRST can collect data to support bringing on a third team.

**Opportunity Knocks Update:** Kickoff is next Tuesday for their 11th year! The Council was pleased to hear that Monica has officially accepted the program planner position and Susan will remain on as a consultant.

**Head Start Update:** Mia reported the program has openings. They were also impacted by the federal sequestration and as a result have cut program hours by five hours per week. They will focus on safety this year.

**Family Resource Centers (FRC) Update:** In Amy Waterman's absence, Traci Dubois reported that the FRC is recruiting new families and will be hosting parent workshops soon.

**Kindergarten Kickstart Update:** It was asked if anyone could provide this update and Izzi said she will ask and report back to us at the October Meeting. Traci noted that ten Farm Hill children attended the program at the Green Street Arts Center.

**VI. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 with thanks to those in attendance.

The next meeting of the Middletown School Readiness Council will take place on  
Wednesday, October 16th, 2013

from

12:00 - 1:30 P.M.

at

Wilbert Snow School  
299 Wadsworth St.  
Middletown, CT 06457

Respectfully Submitted by:  
Sheila C. Daniels